

Project Name: Deer Pen West Pinyon-Juniper Removal

Proposed Action. Encroaching pinyon and juniper trees would be mechanically removed from the 196-acre Deer Pen West Hydro-axe unit and the 638-acre Deer Pen West Hand-cutting unit. Encroaching pinyon and juniper trees would be removed, leaving sagebrush, other woody vegetation, grasses and forbs relatively undisturbed, thus protecting soils from erosion and maintaining or improving the herbaceous understory. Conditions would be improved in greater sage-grouse preliminary priority and preliminary general habitat as well as in mule deer and elk summer and winter range. The project would improve the connectivity of work already completed in the project vicinity including the Deer Pen Greater Sage-Grouse Habitat Improvement Pinyon-Juniper Removal project implemented during fall 2014, as well as other mechanical and prescribed burning projects implemented in the Deer Pen area since 2004. These projects were designed to improve greater sage-grouse habitat by restoring sagebrush shrublands, improve mule deer and elk summer and winter range, and reduce fuel loads.

Deer Pen West Hydro-axe Unit. Encroaching pinyon and juniper trees would be mechanically removed with a contractor-furnished hydro-axe or similar large equipment (e.g, Fecon Bull Hog) where feasible. Pinyon and juniper trees inaccessible to a hydro-axe or other large equipment due to large rocks, steep terrain, delicate soils, or other limitations would be hand-cut by contractor and/or interagency fire crews. Felled trees would be lopped and branches scattered.

Mature trees with stem diameters of at least 18 inches at the 1-foot stump height growing in deep drainages would be retained for migratory birds and big game thermal and hiding cover. Gambel oak, sagebrush, and other woody vegetation would not be removed.

Deer Pen West Hand-Cutting Unit: Encroaching pinyon and juniper trees with a diameter at breast height of 6 inches or less would be hand-cut by contractor and/or interagency fire crews. Felled trees would be lopped and branches scattered.

Project Design Features:

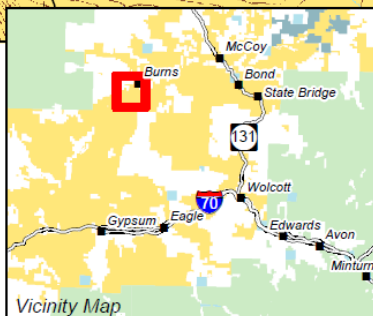
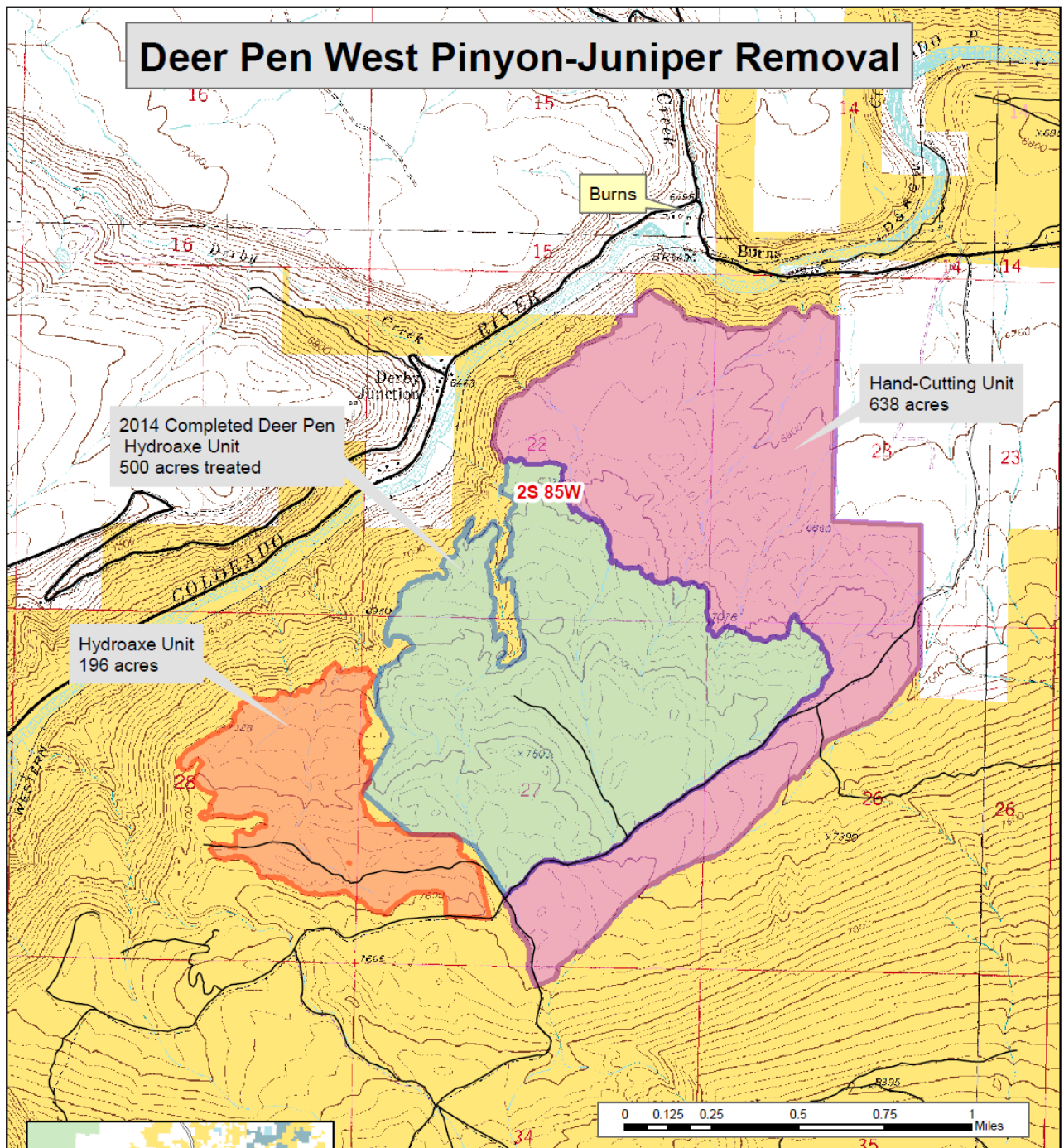
- The contractor will drive the hydro-axe or other heavy equipment off-route within areas identified for treatment, removing all parts of the tree to a stubble height of 6" or less except where adjacent rocks would damage equipment.
- Vegetation will be reduced to a mulch material with a minimum of 80% of the woody material less than 1" in diameter and 6" long. The mulch will be scattered evenly across the soil surface and not remain in piles greater than 8" deep.
- The contractor will be responsible for power-washing or comparable cleaning of all equipment and vehicles used on the project prior to entering the project area to ensure that noxious weed seeds are removed. BLM will require a pre-work inspection to ensure compliance.
- The contractor will post signs (1/8-1/4 mile either side of work area) on public access roads and trails warning visitors of dangerous heavy equipment use in the area. These signs will be checked daily to ensure they are in place. The signage will be coordinated with and pre-approved by the BLM/CPW Project Inspector (PI).
- Any routes that may be created during the project will be covered with woody material to prevent continued use after project completion.

- Wheeled motorized equipment will not be operated when conditions are muddy or the soil moisture is high enough for the vehicles to leave ruts over 4.0 inches deep.
- The project inspector will be informed of any objects or sites of cultural, paleontological, or scientific value such as historic or prehistoric resources, graves or grave markers, human remains, ruins, cabins, rock art, fossils, or artifacts. The objects shall not be damaged, destroyed, removed, moved, or disturbed. Any person who knowingly violates this may be subject to fines and/or imprisonment (Public Law 16-95; 16 U.S.C. 470).

Hydro-axe work in the Deer Pen West Hydro-axe unit would be expected to occur between September 1 – May 1, 2015. No work would be performed during second or third Colorado big game rifle hunting seasons, October 17-25 and October 31-November 8, 2015. Hand-cutting would not be implemented from May 15-July 15 to minimize impacts to breeding migratory birds or during the second or third Colorado big game rifle hunting seasons.

No Action Alternative. Encroaching pinyon and juniper trees would not be removed from the project area. No change from current management would occur.

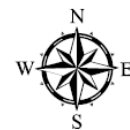
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Legend

- Deer Pen West Hand-Cutting Unit - 638 acres
- 2014 Completed Deer Pen Hydroaxe Unit - 500 acres treated
- Hydroaxe Unit - 196 acres
- Township & Range
- Bureau of Land Management
- Private

Bureau of Land Management - UCRIFMU, 2815 H Road, Grand Junction, CO 81506
Date: 7/20/2015



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